

hearts will be glowing by jellyfishes

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: Christmas, Coming Out, Fluff, M/M

Language: English

Characters: Dustin Henderson, Eleven (Stranger Things), Lucas Sinclair, Mike Wheeler, Steve Harrington, Will Byers

Relationships: Will Byers/Mike Wheeler

Status: Completed

Published: 2017-11-18

Updated: 2017-11-18

Packaged: 2022-04-02 14:54:39

Rating: General Audiences

Warnings: No Archive Warnings Apply

Chapters: 1

Words: 2,125

Publisher: archiveofourown.org

Summary:

Anonymous asked: Maybe for a prompt, Will sees how confident hanging out with Steve has made Dustin and all the advice Steve gives him, so Will goes to Steve and asks how to tell Mike he likes him?

hearts will be glowing

Author's Note:

This is set around Christmas, the year after season 2. It can be assumed that Mike and El broke up amicably before this story begins. Title from “It’s the Most Wonderful Time of the Year”! Thank you anon for the idea!

“So does Steve, like, give you advice about stuff?” Will asks, pedaling his bike slowly.

It’s a rare moment when Will and Dustin are alone together. It’s rare for *any* two of them to be alone together, actually, but especially for them. Only for a few brief moments on their way home from Mike’s house, which is the case today.

He’s been holding in the question for ages now, since the very first time he saw Steve and Dustin suddenly acting like brothers. He doesn’t know why it’s been burning in the back of his mind, except maybe he does and doesn’t want to admit it even to himself.

“Yeah, all the time,” Dustin answers. “About girls, and hair, and, well that’s pretty much it. But if I asked him about something else, I’m sure he’d know what to say. He’s good at that.”

“He doesn’t—Judge you? No matter what?”

Dustin scoffs. “No way! Why, do you have a big secret you want to tell him?”

He’s only teasing, but Will feels his heart squeeze anyway. “No,” he says, unconvincingly. Dustin has never been the most observant, though, so he doesn’t call him out on it. “I just—I’m not doing good in math class.”

“Oh, don’t ask Steve about math,” Dustin says, very seriously. “He’ll try his best, but you’ll get an F every time.”

“Yeah, forget it,” Will laughs.

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More often than not, Steve joins them for Friday night D&D. He's spectacularly awful at it, but like most things, he tries his best. No one tells him that he sucks, they all just share looks with each other when he's not looking, and applaud him whenever he does something right.

"I'm gonna grab us some snacks," Steve says after he dies within ten minutes of starting the campaign.

Will knows this might be his only opportunity to talk to Steve alone, so he jumps up at the same time. "I have to go to the bathroom," he announces, too loud for the otherwise quiet room.

"Man, we just started!" Lucas groans.

"Sorry," Will says as he jogs up the stairs after Steve.

"Oh, hey," Steve says when he hears him. "Did you want something? I was gonna grab chocolate puddings for everyone."

"Mrs. Wheeler hides the chocolate pudding when Dustin's here," Will says. He points at the highest cabinet, the one above the fridge, and says, "It's in there."

"Thanks," Steve nods, climbing on the counter without hesitation. If Mrs. Wheeler saw him do that, she would have a conniption, so it's lucky that she's taking a bath upstairs. After he retrieves the entire container of chocolate pudding and is back on solid ground, Steve frowns. "You okay, bud?"

"I'm fine," Will answers quietly. "Just—"

There are some things that Will can't tell Jonathan. Not yet, anyway. It isn't because he because he wouldn't understand, or because he doesn't trust him. It's just that some things can't be taken back. Some things make everything *weird*. Jonathan means too much to him to risk that. Steve, though. Steve is someone who is nice to have around, but not essential to Will's happiness.

Steve sets the food on the counter and leans against it casually. "Talk

to me.”

Will blushes. “You won’t tell anyone, will you?”

“Dude, no,” Steve shakes his head.

All in one breath, Will asks, “Do you think it’s bad if a boy likes another boy?”

Will doesn’t know what to call Steve’s expression. Surprise, mostly, but maybe a little bit of pride too.

“What would be bad about that?” Steve says, elbowing him gently.

“I don’t know,” Will says. “People at school—”

“Don’t worry about them,” Steve interrupts. “They’re not worth it. You like who you like, it shouldn’t matter to them who it is.”

Will nods, and tries to feign nonchalance as he picks up the puddings and turns away. “Better get back,” he says.

Steve doesn’t let him get very far. “Hey, wait,” he says. “If you need to talk to someone, just let me know, okay? You’re my friend now, kid.”

Will goes back downstairs blushing. The tight, painful feeling that seems to be permanent in his chest is dissipating, if only a little bit.

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Mike is Will’s best friend, his biggest supporter, and, unbeknownst to him, the boy Will has been crushing on for years.

Will didn’t even know, at first. It was only after he took a good, hard look at his feelings and compared them to the way he feels about the other party members that he started to realize. The day that really confirmed it was when Mike and El announced that they decided to just be friends, and Will’s heart did this skipping thing in his chest. He loves El like a sister and he always wants Mike to be happy, but in that moment, he celebrated. From then on, his thoughts are a constant stream of *Mike, Mike, Mike*. It doesn’t help that he’s with

him almost every day, either. It's like every time he sees him, Will's feelings grow stronger.

"Kid?" Will hears. Blinking his eyes into focus, he sees Steve raising his eyebrows at him.

"Sorry, what?"

"I said, you wanna help me bring the Christmas presents down?"

Will nods, standing up and stretching. He's been sitting on the basement floor for far too long, and both of his legs are asleep.

"You bought us presents?" he asks, when his mind catches up to what he actually agreed to help with.

Steve laughs, grabbing his keys. "You were really out of it, huh?"

"Sorry," Will says. He slips on his coat when Steve gives him a disapproving look, and then follows him out into the dark, cold night. Steve pops open the trunk, revealing a huge pile of presents, all wrapped in different paper.

"My parents are really into Christmas," Steve says by way of explanation. "I guess I am too, though."

Will starts to reach for a couple of the boxes, but Steve holds his hand out. "Wait, I wanted to ask if you're doing okay."

"Oh," Will says, surprised. "Yeah, I'm—"

"Fine?" Steve quirks his lips.

Will laughs. "I mean, yeah."

"Do I get to know anything else about *the boy*?"

"No," Will says, his cheeks red from the cold, obviously, not from blushing.

"Seriously?" Steve says with a pout. "I won't tell, you know that."

"I know," Will sighs, kicking up a pile of snow near his feet. "Fine, I

—Um,” it’s too hard to force Mike’s name out of his mouth, so instead he says, “He’s our Dungeon Master.”

Steve thinks for a second and then asks, incredulously, “Dustin?”

“No!” Will scrunches his face. “I mean, not that there’s anything wrong with him, but—No, no. It’s—It’s Mike.”

“Oh,” Steve says. And then, “ *Oh !*”

Will’s teeth start to chatter. “Is that weird?”

“No, it’s not weird,” Steve says dismissively. “It makes sense. You see him every day, he’s always there for you, you’ve been through a lot together, yeah, it makes sense.”

He seems to be thinking about it more, nodding to himself. “Yeah. I see that.”

“Is it obvious?” Will asks meekly.

“Nah, only after you told me,” Steve reassures him, and then pats him on the shoulder. “Now help me with these presents before you freeze to death.”

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Somehow, it becomes a *thing* .

At first, it only happened a few times, until suddenly, Steve was pulling Will aside at every moment to make sure he’s okay and to ask if he needs to talk. And it’s nice to have someone to gush with about Mike’s freckles and his curly hair in the morning and the way his voice goes all soft and fragile whenever Will talks about the Upside Down or the Mind Flayer. He’s never had an outlet for these feelings before, and saying them out loud feels like a breath of fresh air. For years, all he could do was look the other way and try to hide the smile on his face when Mike did something particularly adorable, but now he can actually talk about it. *Out loud* .

Steve always listens to him patiently and only offers advice if Will asks for it. Until one day, when Steve says, “I think you should tell

Mike.”

“What?” Will says immediately. “Why?”

“Because I’ve been watching him lately,” Steve says, and then shakes his head. “That sounds creepy. I’ve just been *noticing* things.”

“Like what?” Will narrows his eyes suspiciously. He can’t help the weak hope blossoming in his chest.

“You guys were play-fighting yesterday and when you slapped Mike’s hand away, he held on for a really long time,” Steve says. “A *really* long time.”

“That doesn’t mean anything,” Will sighs. “He does that all the time.”

“Exactly!” Steve whisper-shouts. Will nervously glances around the room to see if anyone noticed, but they’re too distracted counting their coins for the arcade. “Does Mike do that with anyone else? No. And you know how much Mike loved holding hands with Eleven when they were together. I’m not saying it *means* something, but I’m saying it doesn’t *not* mean something.”

“He doesn’t like me,” Will says. “You don’t know him like I do—He doesn’t—He’s not like—”

“How do you know?” Steve raises his eyebrows. “Have you told Mike *you* like boys?”

“Well—” he splutters, glancing at Mike across the room. “No, but—”

“*But* nothing,” Steve smirks, and then his face softens. “I really think he likes you too. I wouldn’t lie to you, Will.”

Will watches Mike as he moves coins into neat piles, his lips moving silently while he counts. His hair is flopping down over his eyes—everyone seems to be growing their hair out now that Steve has joined their group—and he keeps reaching up to brush it away.

“How should I tell him?” Will asks in a moment of either bravery or insanity.

A proud smile spreads over Steve's lips. "Now we're talkin'."

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Will never gets a chance to try any of the *many* suggestions Steve gave him. Steve had written out an entire list of ideas, all of which had taken thought and care, and Will had finally narrowed it down to two, when Mike beats him to the punch.

"Hey Will?" Mike asks, a few days before Christmas. "Can I ask you something?"

They're in Mike's room after everyone else has gone home. The house is silent and the lights are dimmed. Ordinarily, shadows make Will feel uneasy, but it's hard to feel anything short of *happy* around Mike.

"Okay," Will says warily.

Mike bites his lip and then says, "Do you, um, is it true, what the kids at school say? Are you really gay?"

Will feels cold dread seep into his lungs, making it hard to breathe. "I —"

"Because I wouldn't care," Mike says quickly, his eyes wide. He looks scared, but Will doesn't know why. "I just was, um, wondering."

Will only slightly relaxes, still tense and unsure. "Yes," he whispers. "It's true."

Then there's the feeling of Mike's hand settling on top of Will's, a solid, grounding weight. Will tries to tamp down the fluttering in his chest.

"Me too," Mike says.

"What do you mean?" Will's eyes go back and forth from Mike to their clasped hands.

"I still like girls, but I like—I like you, Will."

Involuntarily, Will squeezes Mike's hand in shock. "You do?"

Mike lets out a short, nervous laugh. “Yeah, I do.”

Will tries to find a hint of a joke in Mike’s eyes, but all he sees is a mirrored image of Will’s own fear and love and hope.

“I like you too,” Will says, giggling. “I—I told Steve. And we planned out all these ways I could tell you.”

“Guess I kinda ruined it, then,” Mike’s lips quirk up.

“You didn’t ruin anything,” Will says softly, and squeezes Mike’s hand again. “You could never.”

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They don’t tell Steve, at first. They want to see how long it will take for him to guess it himself.

Not long at all, as it turns out. They’re only three days into the new year when Steve pulls Mike and Will aside and says, “You little shits are dating, aren’t you?”

They glance at each other with their best poker faces. Innocently, Will asks, “Why would you say that?”

Steve squints at them. “I don’t even know which of you I should give the *if you hurt him, I’ll hurt you* talk to. Maybe neither of you. Or both?”

Will breaks into a grin at Steve’s genuinely perplexed face.

“Steve?” he says, more seriously. He gives Mike a small smile too, wrapping their hands together. Steve notices it, his eyes fond. “Thank you.”

Author's Note:

Thank you for reading! Comments always fill my empty heart with love and happiness :')

You can also find me at my [stranger things blog](#), where I'm taking prompts!